

Brussels, 16 June 2003

EU among first to sign Convention on Tobacco Control

Health and Consumer Protection Commissioner David Byrne and the Greek Council Presidency are among the first to sign in Geneva today the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) on behalf of the European Union. The Convention is open for signature from today on. As soon as 40 countries ratify the Convention, it becomes law in those countries and for all other countries that sign thereafter. The FCTC is a mixed Convention, requiring ratification both from the Community and EU Member States. Prior to the FCTC signing ceremony, Gro Harlem Brundtland will present the special WHO Director-General's World No Tobacco Day Award to David Byrne for his "remarkable contribution towards European and global tobacco control". The EU played a leading role in developing and promoting tobacco control policies within the Community and in the FCTC process.

Commenting on the historic agreement, Commissioner David Byrne welcomed this major breakthrough in the fight to stem the tobacco epidemic. He said: "With the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the tide has turned decisively in the battle to empower our citizens to live healthy lives, free from the scourge of tobacco. It is important to get the first 40 ratifications of the FCTC as soon as possible to implement this useful tool and to reverse the rising death-toll which now claims nearly five million lives every year. Armed with this Convention we can move forward to make tobacco control a cornerstone of health and development. The Convention is testimony to the solidarity of an alliance of 192 countries who have decided to put the health of their citizens first." The FCTC was adopted by all 192 Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO) on 21 May (see [IP/03/722](#)).

This global health treaty - the first ever created under the auspices of the WHO - includes international rules on smoking prevention and treatment, advertising and promotion, labelling, illicit trade, taxation and product regulation.

For more details about the FCTC see:

<http://www.who.int/gb/fctc/>

Pictures of the award ceremony with Gro Harlem Brundtland and David Byrne as well as of the signing ceremony will be available at:

<http://www.who.int/multimedia/fctcsigning/photo.html>

as well as at the public health website of the Commission:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/index_en.html

and at the audiovisual library of the Commission:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/mediatheque/photo/index_en.html